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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1629  
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1546  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0689  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0687  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0448  
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0368  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0056  
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SUBJECT: BIHAR SUFFERS WORST FLOOD IN THREE DECADES WITH 77 DEATHS  
AND 11 MILLION AFFECTED

REF: A) KOLKATA 201 B) KOLKATA 230 C) KOLKATA 231

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: As of August 6, flood conditions in the East Indian state of Bihar remain serious, with a rising toll of now 77 deaths. However, water levels are stabilizing. The Indian Army and Air Force are supporting state government's relief and rescue efforts. Bihar officials say there is no shortage of food and dry rations but they are receptive to humanitarian aid, urging civil society organizations to help with non-food relief material. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) Bihar is experiencing what has been described as the worst monsoon flooding in three decades. According to estimates by Bihar's Disaster Management department, 11 million of Bihar's 82 million people have been affected by this year's rains and floods. These 11 million mostly reside in rural, northern Bihar districts and areas: Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Saharsa, West Champaran, East Champaran, Supaul, Darbhanga, Patna, Nalanda, Bhagalpur, Banka, Katihar, Samastipur, Seohar, Khagaria, Gopalganj, Madhepura, Araria and Begusarai.

[1](#)3. (U) Bihar's Disaster Management Department told Post that 77 people have been confirmed dead, up from 24. The flooding rivers have destroyed at least one million hectares of crops. Initial estimates put the crop loss at about USD 25 million. Over 71,000 homes have also been damaged. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has offered USD 100 to compensate affected farmers.

[1](#)4. (U) The local government response generally has been timely, but the magnitude of the problem has stretched its resources. The Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) are supporting the state government. Since August 4, four IAF helicopters have been average 14 sorties a day, supplying dry rations to areas like Darbhanga, Madhubani and Motihari - these areas have few suitable roads for heavy vehicle traffic. IAF is also operating in the Begusarai and Samastipur areas.

[1](#)5. (SBU) A Senior Bihar government official told Post that the flooding this year was "Unprecedented, but the state machinery

is fully and effectively functional." He believed that there was no immediate need for relief materials beyond what the GOI has already provided but he would welcome NGOs providing medicines and medical supplies soon after the water recedes to combat anticipated disease and illness.

¶6. (U) Indian Federal Home Minister Shivraj Patil and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi are scheduled to tour the flood ravaged areas to make an assessment of the conditions.

¶7. (U) COMMENT: Eastern India's persistent cycle of annual flooding repeatedly devastates the region's population and its economic and social development. This year's floods, while unusual in the scale of the destruction, are all too predictable. Bihar will continue to remain one of India's poorest state while no sustained effort is made to address the problem of seasonal floods.

JARDINE